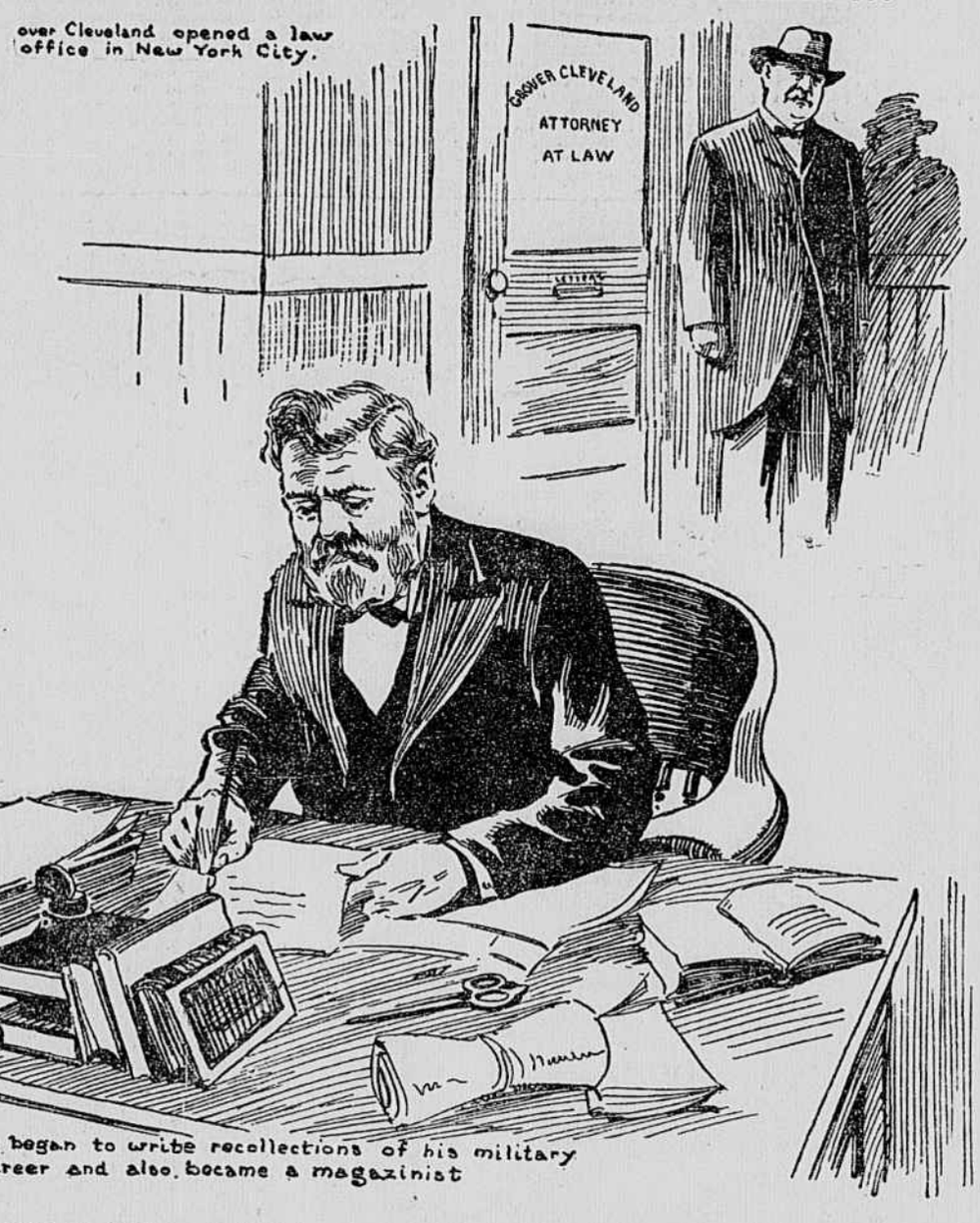
GETTING ACQUAINTED WITH OUR PRESIDENTS

By GEORGE H. PICARD

XV.—Our Presidents as Ex-Presidents.



SOON after Washington's retirement from the presidency in 1796 he wrote from Mount Vernon to a friend as follows:

"I rise with the sun and make the necessary preparations for the day. By the time I have accomplished these matters breakfast is ready. This being over, I mount my horse and ride around my farms, which employs me until it is time to dress for dinner, at which I rarely miss to see strange faces come, as they say, out of respect to me. And how different is this from having a few friends at the social board! The usual time of sitting at table, a walk and tea bring me within the dawn of candlelight, previous to which, if not prevented by company, I resolve that as soon as the glimmering taper supplies the place of the great luminary I will retire to my writing table and acknowledge the letters I have received. Having given you this history of a day, it will serve for a year."

It served for three years with but a single interruption. The year before his death the prospect of a war with France led to his appointment as commander-in-chief of the national army, a distinction which he accepted with great reluctance. Fortunately the war scare subsided speedily, and our first President was left undisturbed in his beautiful retreat at Mount Vernon.

When, on March 4, 1801, John Adams set out for his farm at Quincy, Mass., too disgusted with politics and too indignant over the treatment he had received to appear at the inauguration of his successor, he declared he would never again show his face at the national capital. During an uninterrupted public service of twenty-six years, in which he was instrumental in laying the foundations of a government destined to be the greatest in the history of nations, he had received more blame than praise, and the only privilege he carried with him in his retirement was that of franking his correspondence, sending and receiving letters free from postage for the remainder of his life.

Party spirit was running high in those days, and it pursued him even to his retreat. The persistent attacks of his political enemies embittered his days, and severe domestic affliction made his lot still less tolerable. His eldest son, who had married and was living in New York, died suddenly, leaving a wife and two small children as an additional burden to the rather straitened household at Quincy. The ex-President was sixty-six years of age and without the ambition to resume his long-abandoned profession. He found the sudden transition from his life of perpetual excitement and intellectual activity exceedingly hard to bear at first. He avoided all public gatherings and took no part in political matters, devoting his time to the cultivation of his farm.

In 1813 his only daughter, who had married unhappily, died after a long and distressing illness. Five years later the noble woman who had shared with him for more than half a century the joys and sorrows of a most eventful career passed out of his life. At this time he was eighty-two years of age, broken in health and infirm in body, but mentally sound as ever. With his advancing years his disposition underwent a remarkable change. His cynicism and gruffness of manner disappeared, and he became wonderfully companionable and optimistic. The upward career of his talented son, John Quincy, was a source of the most intense gratification to him, and when, in 1825, the year before his death, a second Adams sat in the presidential chair, his satisfaction was complete.

Jefferson Entertained Like A Prince.

At the close of Jefferson's second administration he remained in Washington only long enough to see his successor and most intimate friend, James Madison, inaugurated. Then he returned to Monticello and settled down into a life which was similar to that of Washington after he retired to Mount Vernon. In one respect, however, Jefferson's retirement was unlike that of Washington—the latter was unembarrassed financially, while the former's princely estate inherited from his father had been drawn upon so heavily that little remained intact. He was so profuse in his hospitality that the revenue of a dukedom would have been insufficient to cover the expense of his establishment. Whole families came to Monticello in their coaches and remained three, or even six, months as guests. One family of six persons came over from Europe and made a visit of ten months. People of wealth, fashion, men in office, professional men, military and civil; Protestant clergymen, Roman Catholic priests, members of Congress, foreign ministers, missionaries, Indian agents, tourists, artists strangers, friend and whomsoever would flocked to Monticello, and all were made welcome by its master.

Such prodigal hospitality consumed even the large fortune which Jefferson inherited. He became involved so deeply that he was obliged to sell a portion of his land holdings in order to pay off his more pressing debts. Finally he applied to the Virginia Legislature for permission to dispose of a large portion of his property by lottery so that he might prevent foreclosure and the collapse of the university he had founded at Charlottesville. After a good deal of hesitation and discussion, the Legislature refused to make a grant to the university, but authorized the lottery. In his petition Jefferson declared that although he was opposed to all forms of gambling, he was of the opinion that lotteries, if conducted fairly, were not immoral.

Toward the last his friends went to his financial rescue, so that he was spared the crowning grief of ejectment from Monticello. Practically too late to be of actual service to him, a great wave of popular appreciation swept over the country, and abundant financial aid poured in upon him from all quarters. The lottery scheme was abandoned, and after Jefferson's death the landed estate was sold. The proceeds were not sufficient to pay the debts, and the executor immortalized himself by supplying the balance from his own purse.

March 4, 1817, James Madison's second term expired, and he retired to his beautiful Virginia estate of Montpelier ,within a day's ride of Monticello; so that in the region of big land holdings he accounted himself a "near neighbor of Jefferson." The ex-President's health was very delicate, but he passed nineteen very peaceful years at Montpelier. He seldom left home, although he took a lively interest in the agricultural development of the country and also co-operated heartily with Jefferson in looking after the welfare of the university which the latter had founded at Charlottesville. In 1829 Madison consented to become a member of the convention held at Richmond to revise the Constitution of the State. During the sixteen weeks the convention was in session he made two speeches, but he was so feeble that he read them from manuscript while sitting in his chair.

When Monroe surrendered the presidential chair to his Secretary of State, John Quincy Adams, March 4, 1825, he went immediately to his old home at Oak Hill, Loudoun county, Va. "I have been so long away from the place," he wrote to a friend soon afterward, "that it is scarcely habitable." He had been so many years in the public service that he had neglected his own pecuniary interests, and found himself to be deeply in debt, with little prospect of bettering his condition. However, he went bravely to work, despite his advancing years, to discharge some of his most pressing obligations. On account of Mrs. Monroe's delicate health they lived in comparative seclusion, the ex-President rarely leaving home even for a day.

Five years after his retirement Monroe lost his wife, and he was so prostrated over the blow that he never recovered. He could not endure the lonellness of Oak Hill, now that the admirable woman who had been so integral a part of his life was no more, and he went to New York City to make his home with his married daughter, Mrs. Gouverneur. There he died a year later, at the age of seventy-three.

On retiring from his single term in the presidency, John Quincy Adams returned to his humble estate at Quincy, Mass., with the determination to devote the remainder of his life to research, but he was not permitted to remain long in retirement. After a few months of freedom from public service he was elected Representative to Congress, a novel experience for an American ex-President. He did not regard it as a descent from his dignified position as ex-President, and he accepted the new honor.

John Quincy Adams Became a Congressman.

For seventeen years, during the remainder of his life, John Quincy Adams held his seat in the lower house of Congress, towering intellectually above all his fellows, ever ready to do brave battle for freedom. On his first appearance at the Capitol he announced that he should hold himself bound to no party; that he should consider himself free to follow his own best judgment on all questions. Thus it was that he became the "great original independent." There has never been a national legislator more devotd to his duties. He was first to arrive in the morning and last to leave at night. No measure ever introduced escaped his scrutiny.

During that entire period of seventeen years the ex-President made it lively for the advocates of slavery. In every encounter he came off victor. Because he persisted in presenting petitions for the abolition of slavery he was threatened with indictment by the grand jury, with expulsion from the House of Representatives, and even with assassination, but no threats could intimidate him, no consideration of personal safety induce him to keep silent when he believed it to be his duty to speak. He died at his post. Stricken with paralysis as he rose on the floor of Congress to address the Speaker, February 21, 1848, he fell asleep at the age of eighty.

At the expiration of his second term General Jackson went back to the Hermitage, with the avowed determination of remaining there for the remainder of his life, a resolve which he kept almost to the letter. With all his glaring faults, he was still the popular hero of the great masses of the people, next to Washington, the most popular man who has been Chief Magistrate. Although it is not improbable that his strong hold on the public would have carried him into the presidency for the third time, Jackson was satisfied to name his successor, his nearest political friend, Martin Van Buren. For the remaining eight years of his life he abandoned political strife and prepared himself for the peaceful end, which came June 8, 1845.

Although Martin Van Buren was eager to serve another term, neither his own exhaustive effort nor General Jackson's influence could accomplish it; so he was obliged to retire to the seclusion of Kinderhook, a little Hudson River village, of which he was the leading citizen, while he was still in the very prime of political condition. From his noble estate of Lindenwald he continued to play the game of politics with undiminished zest, but he could not reach the goal of his ambition a second time, although his friends made several strong attempts to send him back to the White House. He lived twenty years after going into retirement, but he never lost his interest in the political situation and was a power in the Empire State.

Tyler a Member of the Confederate Congress.

After his three years and eleven months in the White House—to which he was called after the sudden death of William Henry Harrison—John Tyler retired to his beautiful Virginia estate, Sherwood Forest. Here he lived the quiet life of a man of studious tastes and abundant means until the breaking out of the Civil War, when he renounced his allegiance to the United States and cast his lot with the Confederacy, becoming a member of its Congress. Before the issue came to a decision, ex-President Tyler had passed into the land of eternal peace.

At the age of fifty-four James K. Polk retired from his single term of presidential life with the intention of settling down into peaceful citizenship in the city of Nashville, Tenn., where he had purchased a handsome residence. His death within a little over three months solved the problem in another way.

Millard Fillmore served the two years and eight months in the presidency that fell to him at the death of President Zachary Taylor, but was not continued in office. Before settling down to private life in his Buffalo home the ex-President took an extended tour through the South, in which section of the Union he had many friends, and met with an enthusiastic reception everywhere. Two years later he went abroad and demonstrated, by the cordial reception given him at European courts, that an American ex-President was still a man of importance. Returning home the following year, Mr. Fillmore became the presidential candidate of the so-called Know Nothing party, but was defeated by James Buchanan. During the Civil War he remained neutral, but it was popularly believed that his sympathies were with the South, and although he lived nearly ten years after the return of peace he made no effort to controvert that opinion.

Franklin Pierce lived twelve years after he finished his single term in the presidency and retired to his comfortable home at Concord, N. H. Although he kept aloof from general politics, he made no secret or the fact that the Cival War brought no change in the political principles which he had always advocated and that his sympathy was with the pro-slavery party. He was opposed to seperation, but he declined to do anything, either with voice or pen, to strenghten the handle of the national government. The most genial and honorable or men, he was universally popular in the decidedly critical New England community in which he lived and died.

James Buchanan lived seven years after he retired from the presidency, long enough to see the Civil War which was brewing during his administration fought and reconstructed well under way. The ex-President took no part in the struggle, retiring to his home, Wheatlands, at Lancaster, Pa., and remaining in comparative seclusion for the remainder of his life. Shortly after he returned to private life he made an attempt to defend his political course, but the country was so engrossed in the Cival War that his effort passed unheeded.

Andrew Johnson United States Senator.

Andrew Johnson had no taste for retirement and he had scarcely reached his home at Greenville, Tennessee, before he began to make plans to secure his return to the United States Senate. Although he brought to bear all his political acumen and great personal strength toward the accomplishment of this design, he did not succeed at first. His last official act of importance had been to proclaim complete pardon for all those who had been directly or indirectly concerned in the Confederate cause, but his radical Unionism had antagonized the southern element in his state and his senatorial aspirations were blocked for several years.

Like John Quincy Adams, the ex-President did not regard it as infra dignitate to sit in the lower House of Congress, and he attemped, as an independent candidate, to secure the position, but failed to accomplish it. At last, after persistent effort, he was chosen United States Senator in 1875 and was in his seat, as militant as ever, during the short session in March. His triumph was but short lived, for he died before the next long session gave him the opportunity he craved of settling some old scores with his political enemies.

At the close of his second term, in 1877, General Grant began his record-breaking tour of the entire civilized world, receiving as a great soldier and as America's first citizen honors never before accorded to any one in private life. He returned home in the spring of 1880 and found that a large and influential portion of his party was inclined to put him forward as its presidential, candidate. Although he did not look with disfavor on the proposition, the movement came to nothing on account of the violent opposition to the third-term idea.

The ex-President took up his residence in New York city and was induced to become a member of a financial concern which speedily came to grief and left him penniless and in debt. Then it was that as a prospective breadwinner he began to write his recollections of his military career and also became a magazinist. The year before his death a special enactment of Congress placed him on the retired list of the army as General, with full pay, a position he had resigned when he became President. At least five of his eight years of retirement were the most laborious of his lifetime.

Far less strenuous was the decade lived by Rutherford B. Hays after his retirement from the chief magistracy. In his case there was no lack of the material good things of life to cloud the enjoyment of these final years of home staying. As the chief citizen of Freemont, the ousting little Ohio town in which he spent the remainder of his life, the ex-president kept himself in the public eye by his active participation in philanthropis and educational matters. He was first president of the States Board for the instruction of Freedmen, President of National Prison Association and a member of the Peabody Education Board for the promotion of education in the South and several other enterprises of a similar wide-reaching significance.

Chester A. Arthur lived but two years after his retirement from the presidency, which he had held for three years, five months and two weeks after the assassination of James A. Garfield. He was an avowed aspirant for a succeeded full term, but the Blaine influence stood in the way of the realization of his ambition. President Arthur never made a secret of his disappointment, although he bore it with dignity. He returned to his home in New York city and opened a law office, but he never resumed the active practice of his profession.

Grover Cleveland a University Lecturer.

At the close of his first term Grover Cleveland opened a law office in New York city and made it known that he was prepared to resume the practice of his profession without further notice. Eight years later, when he retired from his second tenancy of the White House—an experience which has occured in the life of no other American President—Mr. Cleveland did not again take his place in the professional ranks, but purchased a modest home at Princeton, N. J., and settled down to the enjoyment of life in the restful and intellectual atmosphere of a college town. There for the remaining decade of his life he took no active part in politics, but devoted himself to literary pursuits—a feature of his work being the delivery of two lectures annually on questions of public policy at the university.

Soon after his term of office ended, Benjamin Harrison accepted a professorship of law in Leland Stanford University. During the remaining eight years of his life he devoted himself assiduously to his profession, being retained in several cases of national importance. In 1899 he appeared as counsel for Venezula before the commission appointed to arbitrate the boundary dispute with England. It was for this service that the ex-President received the record-breaking fee of $100,000. In the same year he was sent as principal representative of the United States at The Hague Peace Conference.

Colonel Roosevelt's career thus far as an ex-President is known to all men, and when it gets into history it will be one of the most interesting pages in the record.

NORWOOD

[Special to The Times-Dispatch.]

Norwood, Va., April 27.—Mrs. Willie Cunningham and children left on Sunday to spend the week in Lynchburg with friends.

Miss Alice Callaway made a short stay in Richmond last week.

Mr. and Mrs. Tempwood returned to Nelson this week from West Virginia, where they have made their home for two years.

Miss Minnie Dolen returned from St. Andrews Hospital on Friday. She was accompanied by Miss Mary Dolen.

Miss Hattie Scruggs left on Wednesday to be the guest of Miss Gertie Johnson, of Bremo, for some time.

Miss Anna B. Bolton and Dr. Dennis, of Lynchburg, spent several days with Mr. and Mrs. Sidney Bolton last week.